

**English 3202G**  
**National and Global Perspectives on Cultural Studies:**  
**Family Photography, Oral History, and Migration**

**Professor: Dr. Thy Phu**

**Winter 2018**

**Mondays 12:30pm – 2:30pm; Wednesdays 12:30-1:30pm**

**AHB 2R21**

**Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:30-11:30am.**

Critics tend to consider family photographs as simply snapshots of domestic scenes, but they are more than this. They are an aspect of visual culture and an integral part of cultural studies, produced and circulated in national and global contexts. Family photography functions as a mode of cultural communication that engages not just our capacity to see, but also inspires us to touch, feel, tell, and listen to stories that accompany images, as well as to reflect on what's remembered and forgotten in these stories. Just as importantly, family photographs—and the stories that accompany them—serve as a way to mediate experiences of dislocation, which are particularly fraught and poignant for refugees and migrants. This course explores family photography as a multisensory form of visual culture that provide a means of narrating the complexities of migration, focusing in particular on the “photo-interview” as a multimedia approach to visual storytelling. We will practice ways of interpreting and historicizing family photography as an aspect of visual culture and as a national artifact that circulates in global contexts, by considering closely a selection of materials collected through The Family Camera Network, a public archiving project. We will also examine these materials in connection with primary sources in order to trace routes of migration to Canada and to examine the nation's links to transnational communities. To understand the significance of visual storytelling through “photo-interviews,” we will read closely key works in cultural studies, including criticism by Roland Barthes, Tina Campt, Marianne Hirsch, and Catherine Zuromskis, and consider foundational titles on oral history. With the guidance of the professor, students will draw on digital tools to produce “photo-interviews” and a podcast documentary and final essay based on one of these interviews.

**Outcomes.** This course will provide resources for students to:

- Understand and apply cultural studies tools to analyze family photography and its historical and social contexts.
- Conduct research on primary sources and assess their significance in considering the significance of these contexts for tracing narratives of migration.
- Understand and apply principles of and approaches to photo-interviewing, with special consideration of ethical implications, by organizing, recording, and transcribing interviews.
- Write self-reflexively about their approach to interviewing and analytically about the results of their photo-interview.

Selected critical and theoretical essays listed below (see detailed schedule).

Roland Barthes, [\*Camera Lucida\*](#)

Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, [\*The Oral History Reader\*](#)

Requirements:

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| Attendance and Participation (includes presentation in symposium)                        | 10% |
| Visual analysis (500 words, to be completed in class on January 31 and March 5)          | 5%  |
| Photo-interview 1: classmate interview (30 minutes) and critical reflection Due: Feb. 26 | 5%  |
| Photo-interview 2: interview on family photography and migration (60 mins)               | 15% |
| “One Photo” documentary podcast based on 60-minute interview (500-700 words)             | 10% |
| Final paper (2000 words) – Due: April 13th   | 20% |
| Final exam   | 35% |